CHAPTER NINE

THE DRUM DANCE AND AMUSEMENTS

(I) The Drum Dance

*535 [181] Although the culture of the Miao in western Hunan is comparatively backward, some of the primitive traits that are preserved today are not entirely without merit. For example, [526] the drum dance and boxing both are worth preserving, especially the drum dance which attracts most attention. Recording the drum dance of the Miao, Miao Fang-pei Lan, "Feng-shu [534] Kao," states: "They cut a tall tree, hollow out the inside, and seal the two ends with animal skins to make a drum. Pretty women are asked to dance and beat on it. They select good men and women singers, who are clad in theatrical clothes in [292] all colors, or wrapped in red blankets, with kerchiefs on the heads and two strips of colored paper trailing behind the back. Men to the left and women to the right, they spin and sing, responding to each other, now raising their arms, now stamping their feet slowly or rapidly in unison to the rhythm of the music. This is called the drum dance." This account is a [782] description of the drum dance during the great Miao sacrificial ceremony of eating ox. In recent times the local governments [656] have repeatedly prohibited licentious rites among the Miao, and so dances such as the drum dance are now rarely held. [186] Those Miao with some education, the so-called enlightened Miao, feel ashamed when talking about their drum dance, because they consider it as exposing their barbaric traits. Some decades from now this kind of drum dance, which so clearly demonstrates their own tribal nature, may become extinct. Following are described in detail the results of our investigations.

[184] The drum dance of the Miao in Hunan is called "monkey drumming." The Hung Miao /Red Miao/ in the vicinity of Tung-jen in Kweichow also have a kind of drum dance called